

1. Impact on P-12 Learning and Development: Case Studies of First Year Teachers

The state of Maryland does not provide teacher impact data to colleges and universities. Therefore, McDaniel College has chosen to provide a case study on a graduate one year out from graduation. This case study highlights a graduate in their first year of teaching and focuses on The Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching, specifically Domain Three: Instruction. Within this domain, data was collected on standards 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques, 3c: Engaging Students in Learning, and 3d: Using Assessment in Instruction. The Danielson Framework is used for this study as it is a nationally recognized and validated tool. Of particular note is that the Danielson Framework is designed to promote teacher professional growth across a continuum founded on the concept that all teachers should be continuing to grow and develop. The study looks at the efficacy of the teachers by using the rubric scores for the teacher as well as the qualitative evidence from the comments by the observer. In order for the teacher to remain anonymous, the term "The Teacher" has been substituted for the teacher's name in the feedback provided by the supervisors.

This first-year teacher was in the 2020-21 completer cohort from McDaniel College and holds a B.A. in Elementary Education. The teacher was hired by a medium/small school district and is teaching in one of the smaller elementary schools. This teacher is teaching 4th grade and teaches all subjects.

For the purpose of this case study, the teacher provided three observation/evaluations. The first observation in October 2021 focused on all areas of the Danielson Framework. As the focus areas for this study are 3b, 3c and 3d, only the feedback related to these areas is noted. This initial observation was rated as Proficient in all three areas. The following comments are from the teacher's supervisor:

"Continue to make similar choices as demonstrated in the following actions as they support engagement and achievement:

- Foundations included choral review of letter sound drill, vowels, -r & all glued sounds.
- Student pairs alternated use of white boards & letter boards, giving each child opportunities to express skills using both items.
- Q & A used to check for understanding of characters and changes over time within the story (How did he feel in the middle?) with prompting for reflection and explanation to support students' responses.
- Q & A opportunity for students regarding directions before commencing small group tasks.
- Supplemental task for those who may finish early (word search).
- Lots of Q & A regarding changes occurring within the story.
- Listening to each student read aloud to assess for each child's strengths/needs.
- Seeking students' understanding of purpose of punctuation used in the story (!).
- Brief discussion of calming & readiness strategies (deep breaths, yoga poses, stretching, whole body listening).

Take the following actions to enhance/promote/further improve student engagement & achievement:

- Develop techniques to collect student performance information during small group reading to help guide next instructional steps for each child.

- Refer to ILOs to bring closure to lessons; ask students to tell if the objective was met or not, & what evidence they have to support that decision.

It was a pleasure to observe your instructional leadership & interpersonal relationships with your students.”

The overall rating for this observation was Proficient. The feedback provided both commendations and areas of growth and demonstrated that this first-year teacher is finding great success in the classroom.

The second, formal observation also occurred in October of 2021. The following feedback was provided on Domain Three. The teacher was rated Proficient in 3b, Distinguished in 3c and Proficient in 3d. The supervisor also provided the following comments:

- “Students were engaged in completing a word search while the teacher assessed a student one-on-one.
- The teacher could not get the online social/emotional video to work, so [they] adjusted and quickly moved on by looking at the feelings chart. [They] did a pulse check on how students were feeling and immediately got into [their] whole group instruction.
- Whole group word work began with quick sound drill, led by the teacher. The teacher used parroting to help [their] students remember the definition. The teacher repeated with the word “rings,” pointing out that ring is the base word and the -s is the suffix. Next, students practiced adding suffixes -s or -ed based on the base word endings.
- Students practiced writing words that ended in the three previously mentioned letters and then added the suffix (Ex. -s or -es) to change boss to bosses based on the spelling rule. Students used the word in a sentence to show their understanding of the word's meaning (Ex: "Jade's bosses make her do a lot of work.") Students tapped sounds in words as they spelled the dictated words. The teacher introduced the suffix -ed and -ing using the same process.
- The teacher drew attention to the ELA whole group objective. Before reading their story, the teacher read aloud the reading response for the whole group independent work. Students followed along as the teacher read aloud. As students read, they discussed the vocabulary words as they read.
- For whole group comprehension instruction, students used text evidence to discuss the informational text. The teacher highlighted text features as students read. Before dismissing students to small reading groups, the teacher shared students' response to text from the previous day's reading.
- Small group reading instruction was differentiated, engaging, and appropriate for the needs of [their] students.”

Again, these comments note that this first-year teacher is demonstrating success in these three areas of the Danielson Framework.

A third structured observation took place in mid-February 2022. The following feedback was provided. The teacher was rated Proficient in 3b, Distinguished in 3c, and Proficient in 3d. The observer included the following comments:

“Continue the following actions as they support student engagement and achievement:

- Morning Message and Today we will ... (agenda) posted and reviewed with whole class.

- Anticipatory Set. Read aloud to prompt students to connect with feelings of the story's characters and a recent story about Harriett Tubman's bravery.
- Choral review of letter-word-sound drill. Students led classmates following the teacher's model.
- Students practiced writing "trick" words on dry erase boards and by sky-writing
- Single words featuring or and are written as part of Bingo-style game, then assessed by students following teacher's spelling of each.
- Deliberate and structured movement (Simon Says. Carpet to desks. Desks to carpet)
- Q & A regarding directions before start of small group tasks.
- Small group: Listening to each student whisper read to assess each child's strengths/needs and sense of main idea (paleontologist passage).

Take the following actions to strengthen student engagement & achievement:

- When presenting words for students to write, consistently say each word at least twice and use the word in a sentence to give it context/meaning
- It was a pleasure to observe your instructional leadership and engagement with your students. It is clear that procedures have become routines that maximize instructional time as there was no need to redirect students within any lesson component or during transitions."

The teacher was clearly finding success in multiple areas with the students. The teacher is found to be overall Proficient in this observation. The teacher, at mid-year, is effectively demonstrating a positive impact on student learning, particularly in Domains 3b, 3c and 3d . Both the comments and the ratings indicate the impact of the teacher on the students. Teacher efficacy is critical for student achievement. Considering the nature and the challenges faced by first-year teachers in an uncertain environment, the teacher's proficiency in a few short months demonstrates that the teacher has the foundational teaching skills to be effective as well as the ability to receive feedback and to make adjustments to instruction to positively impact student achievement.

A second teacher is highlighted in a case study. This teacher is a first-year high school teacher who is a 2020-2021 completer in the Master of Science in Teaching program who teaches both Biology and Chemistry in a rural/suburban school district. The teacher indicated that they have a high number of special needs students in one particular course.

For the purpose of this case study, the teacher provided three observation/evaluations. The first observation in September of 2021 focused on all areas of the Danielson Framework. As the focus areas for this study are 3b, 3c and 3d, only the feedback related to these areas is noted for all observations. This initial observation was rated as: 3B- Basic, 3C- Proficient, 3D- Basic. The overall rating for this observation was Proficient. The following comments are from the teacher's supervisor related to the identified areas:

- "Overall, the lesson was proficient and provided students with a variety of learning opportunities. The teacher provides a quality learning environment for students and is comfortable with the content. The teacher will continue to grow in the area of classroom management by providing simple and clear expectations for all students. Higher level questioning and utilizing formative assessment are two instructional areas that can improve daily instruction."

The second, formal observation also occurred in October of 2021. The following feedback was provided on Domain Three. The teacher was rated Proficient in all three areas. The supervisor also provided the following comments:

- “The teacher’s lesson activities were appropriate for high school students and is aware of students’ special learning and medical needs.
- The lesson outcomes represented high expectations and were clearly written. The lesson had a clearly defined structure around which activities were organized. Consider having students perform some exploration to engage students and provide an experience to connect to their learning
- The teacher has created an environment of respect and rapport with [their] students. [They are] alert to student behavior at all times and use proximity and positive interactions to re-direct students to their learning. The teacher has established clear routines as evidenced by students getting out their computers to get to Schoology for the drill at the beginning of class.
- Classroom expectations for learning, procedures and explanations of content were delivered to students in a clear manner. Most of the teacher’s questions were of high quality and adequate time was provided for students to respond. The teacher did a wonderful job of eliciting prior knowledge from students to connect to the lesson “

The teacher made great progress from the first observation at the very start of the school year to this second observation. It would be very consistent with the experience of first-year teachers to have some Basic ratings early in the year. However, in just a few short weeks, this teacher demonstrated significant growth in the three identified areas within Domain 3 of the Framework.

A third structured observation took place in December of 2021. The following feedback was provided. The teacher was rated Proficient in all three components and the observer included the following comments:

- “Quality Instruction
 - The teacher used proximity and circulating the room to monitor and assist students. They interacted with many students personally and answered questions.
 - There are 23 students enrolled in this class. This quarter’s class/grade book shows 14 assignments. The average grade in the class for quarter two is 84. Most students are meeting success in this class.
 - The classroom is organized. Supplies were readily available.
 - High expectations and clear directions in your teaching are appreciated! Keep up the hard work!”

This teacher, at approximately the mid-point of the year, is demonstrating great success via the ratings and the comments from the supervisors. Similar to the first case study, this teacher was clearly finding success in multiple areas with the students. The teacher, at mid-year, is effectively demonstrating a positive impact on student learning, particularly in Domains 3b, 3c and 3d . Both the comments and the ratings indicate the impact of the teacher on the students. Teacher efficacy is critical for student achievement. Considering the nature and the challenges faced by first-year teachers in an uncertain environment, the teacher’s proficiency in a few short months demonstrates that the teacher has the foundational teaching skills to be effective as well as the ability to receive feedback and to make adjustments to instruction to positively impact student achievement.